ST. DUNSTAN'S

VICTORY OVER BLINDNESS

Programme of Concert

Given by the Blind Musicians

Organised by Lady Pearson D.B.E

FOREWORD

I WOULD like to say a word about the Blind Musicians Concert Party, how it came into existence, its purpose, and what it has accomplished. You can understand the appeal that music makes to those who cannot see and who depend so much on their sense of hearing. So many of their impressions are gained through sound—instead of looking they listen—they are not spectators but auditors of the life about them and their ears are very sensitive, their minds alert to form the pictures that sounds convey. Music is an infinite joy to the blind.

¶ There have always been, too, blind musicians.

¶ But it was during the war, when men were returning blinded from the front, that it occurred to me to bring together a little band of these lovers of music, to train them that they might tour the country, giving concerts for the benefit of the men who are learning to be blind at St. Dunstan's. They would thus be helping the blinded soldiers and at the same time earning a living in a way that was delightful to them, making a practical use of their gifts. They, too, would be proving to the world that to be called blind is not to be called helpless—that it may become a distinction, implying very remarkable capacities. By the serious study of music, by travel, by coming constantly in contact with new people their outlook would be widened, new self-reliance, new interests would come into their lives.

¶ It has involved a great deal of hard work for these blind musicians—constant rehearsals, almost daily journeys by train, but the concerts have proved an astonishing success. Many thousands of pounds have been raised and handed over to the fund for the care of blinded soldiers. Yet the appeal is not from the Blind to a warm-hearted public—but from Musicians to lovers of music.

¶ Such at least is the hope of those who appear at the concert to-day.

Ethel Pearson

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE
· FOR THE BLIND ·

· · *To which is affiliated* · ·

ST DUNSTAN'S BLINDED SOLDIERS' & SAILORS' AFTER-CARE FUND

(REGISTERED UNDER THE WAR CHARITIES' ACT, 1916)

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Branches: Moon Society for the Blind; Home Teaching Society for the Blind; Institution for Massage by the Blind; Convalescent Homes for Blinded Soldiers and Sailors; After-Care of Blinded Soldiers and Sailors; After-Care of Blind Civilians; Residential Club for Blind Women; Home for Blind Babies; Higher Education of the Blind.

Secretary-General: HENRY STAINSBY.

THIS booklet deals with the manifold activities of the National Institute for the Blind. Of the many thousands of blind people in the United Kingdom, the majority are in very poor circumstances. To provide them with literature, with music—there are many splendid musicians amongst the blind—to assist financially those in real need, to lighten the lives of all those who are so cruelly deprived of the blessed gift of sight, who are nevertheless normal brave men and women—there is no nobler cause for which the energies and devotion of every-one who possesses the faintest spark of sympathy and human understanding can be given.

As briefly as possible, then, under various heads, we propose to tell of the Institute and its work. Fuller and more detailed reports of the several sections will be sent to anyone interested.

The After-Care of the Blinded Soldiers and Sailors.

On March 26th, 1915, fourteen blinded soldiers were admitted to St. Dunstan's Hostel, Regent's Park, that

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and actresses, musicians, singers, lecturers, and notabilities who have faced one of the most appreciative audiences in the world—the men of St. Dunstan's—would indeed be a long one. Instruction in music, debates on various topics, dances, visits to theatres and music-halls, domino tournaments, draughts and card games, the hours of relaxation were never dull to a St. Dunstanner. Two Chapels were constructed in the grounds of the Hostel, one for the Protestant and one for the Roman Catholic faith.

But we cannot give here the full story of St. Dunstan's. Enough, however, has surely been said to describe the magnitude of the work, to lay emphasis on the fact that the assistance given by the Institute to St. Dunstan's was never intended to cease after the blinded soldier and sailor had completed his six months' training and the time had come for him to return to his own home and begin life afresh in a new one. Think of the problems still to be faced. He is going into a new world to compete with his sighted rivals. This means that his future must be assured as far as is humanly possible. There is raw material to be found ; there are innumerable business details he will have to tackle; it is essential that he should not be allowed to imagine that the interest and sympathy extended to him since he first realised his handicap has ceased with his departure from the Hostel. Every man who has been set up by St. Dunstan's has been provided free with plant and appliance, while great care is taken to ensure his settlement in a suitable locality. Such considerations made the establishment of an After-Care Branch imperative. The St. Dunstan's Blinded Soldiers' and Sailors' After-Care is a branch that the National Institute for the Blind will develop into one of great magnitude, for as we have hinted, its work will be to assist the blinded soldiers and sailors, to inspect their work, to help them in their business, to be a real Alma Mater of the St. Dunstanner.

The Output of Embossed Literature.

The publication of literature in embossed type has been and always must be one of the chief activities of the Institute. It is gratifying to be able to record that, in spite of the war, which has rendered materials more costly than in normal times, as well as making them more difficult to obtain, the

output of Braille books has been steadily maintained. In 1919 there were produced 25,891 large bound volumes in Braille, 56,699 magazines, 127,064 newspapers, and 17,561 pamphlets. Also 2,798 bound volumes of music and 22,585 pieces of music, making a total of 255,323.

Stress should be laid on the fact that in spite of the great increase in cost of all materials, as already mentioned, the Council have felt justified in so reducing the price of Braille Books that no volume now exceeds 2s. 6d. Full-sized volumes formerly averaged 3s. 9d. each. The reduction is due firstly to the generous response to the President's appeals in 1914-1915, and secondly to the better equipment of the publishing department.

The publication of books in Moon type has also been maintained with vigour. Moon Type is especially fitted for those who have lost their sight late in life, as it is much simpler in character than Braille. The Moon printing department is at Brighton, though the supervision of the work is carried on at the Institute. In 1919, 26,332 bound volumes, magazines, etc., were issued in this type, while new book-plates to the number of 7,872 were produced.

Braille Music.

The publication of Braille music, which ranks hardly less in importance than literature, has been greatly extended. An eminent blind musician, Mr. H. C. Warrilow, F.R.C.O., has been engaged to take charge of it.

The publishing department has grown considerably, thereby enabling the Council to provide suitable and remunerative employment for a much larger number of educated blind persons than formerly.

The Home Teaching Society for the Blind.

In late years great strides have been made in the production of books printed in embossed type. At the same time it must be borne in mind that there are thousands of blind people who are too poor to buy these books even at the modest price at which they are sold. It is to cater for these that the Home-Teaching Society, now a branch of the Institute, was started. Stated very briefly, the work of the

Home Teaching Society is to seek out, teach and systematically visit and assist the blind living in their own homes. Very many of these are poor and aged, while others suffer from so terrible a handicap as combined deafness and blindness. The visiting is carried on by a band of blind teachers in the employ of the Society, but this by no means exhausts its works and aims.

Massage.

The suitability of Massage as a Profession for blind persons has of late found ample proof in the success that has attended students trained at the Massage Branch of the National Institute for the Blind. In the past four years over one hundred students, the majority being blinded soldiers from St. Dunstan's, have passed the examination of the Incorporated Society. The majority of these students, after qualifying, have been appointed to Military and other hospitals and many have started in private practice. Arrangements have also been made for the blind masseurs' services to be utilised for the treatment of disabled soldiers in connection with the Local Committees of the Ministry of Pensions. A medico-scientific library has been inaugurated for the use of Massage students, a blind doctor being in charge of this section of the work.

Home for Blind Babies.

The urgent need for suitable training for blind children from birth until their admission to Schools for the Blind at the age of five has resulted in the acquisition of a suitable building and grounds by the National Institute for the Blind as a Home for Blind Babies. "Sunshine House," as the Home is called, is located at Chorley Wood, Herts, about twenty miles out of London. It consists of a beautiful house standing in nine acres of ground, in a most charming position, and the Council of the Institute will do everything in their power to train these children into good and useful habits and to save their sight where it is possible to do so. Other "Sunshine Homes" will be equipped as soon as possible.

The Cedars, Chorley Wood.

A magnificent mansion known as The Cedars, standing in beautifully wooded grounds some fifty acres in extent,

has been presented to the Institute by Mr. J. H. Batty, The Manor House, Chorley Wood, and it is the intention of the Council to use it as a College for the higher education of blind girls.

College for the Higher Education of the Blind, Worcester.

This College, on the governing body of which the Institute is well represented—the President, Sir Arthur Pearson, Bart., being Chairman—has benefited by large monetary grants from the Institute, and recently by the gift from the Institute of a house and grounds known as "The Gables." This property adjoins the College, and will in fact form an extension of it. It will enable the College to receive nine or ten additional students. The Institute has also been able to assist the College by supplying, free of charge, a large quantity of educational works in Braille, many of these having been produced in the Institute's Manuscript Department.

Hostel for Blind Women.

The ever-increasing difficulties experienced by the Institute's blind women employees in finding suitable lodgings for themselves has led the Council to provide a Hostel for their use at 38 and 40 Langham Street, W.1. This Hostel (or Club) provides accommodation of exceptional comfort considering the very moderate cost.

The Council are convinced that this new venture on their part will receive the warm commendation of the supporters of the Institute.

Telephony.

It might be supposed that the management of a telephone switchboard would be entirely dependent on visual as well as manual dexterity, but this is a fallacy which has been disproved over and over again ; and we are now face to face with the gratifying fact that telephony is an occupation that can be successfully carried on by blind people. Loss of sight can be compensated for by quickness of

hearing, while the management of the switchboard is soon acquired. A knowledge of Braille shorthand, made possible through the use of a machine designed for the purpose, enables the operator to record numbers, messages, etc. Instruction in this branch is given at the National Institute by a blind operator ; a double head-gear is available for teacher and pupil. The extraordinary accuracy with which messages are received and given in the operating-box of the Institute has long dispelled any doubt as to the ability of blind telephonists to hold their own.

It has, of course, been possible in this brief resumé of the activities of the National Institute only cursorily to touch on the great work that is being done for the Blind community. But assuredly it does not require an exceptionally vivid imagination to realise that the successful prosecution of the work depends entirely on the generous support of a public who have been ever ready to respond to the appeals made to them for that support.

Although we are at peace after these long years of war, there are nevertheless so many urgent claims on the pocket of us all that it is with natural diffidence that any fresh appeal is launched on the field of philanthrophy.

The Blinded Soldiers and Sailors who have cheerfully given so much for their country, the poor and needy struggling so bravely against their stern handicap, the enlightenment of those who are for ever doomed to live in a world of darkness—the least we can do is to take every means in our power to ensure that they are placed in a position successfully to cope with the conditions against which they have to struggle.

Through the medium of Lady Pearson's Blind Musicians Concert Appeal.

To the President and Hon. Treasurer of

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND

224-6-8, GREAT PORTLAND STREET, LONDON, W.1.

I have pleasure in assisting the above Institute in the following manner:—

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"OUT OF THE NIGHT THAT COVERS ME,
BLACK AS THE PIT FROM POLE TO POLE,
I THANK WHATEVER GODS MAY BE
FOR MY UNCONQUERABLE SOUL."

These lines, written by W. E. Henley
when stricken with paralysis, are a
magnificent elaboration of the
St. Dunstan's motto :—

"VICTORY OVER BLINDNESS."

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